

socialist

standard

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

Circus Act

Capitalism's Men at the Big Top



The new dynamic politics of capitalism page 8



The other side of Israel page 14



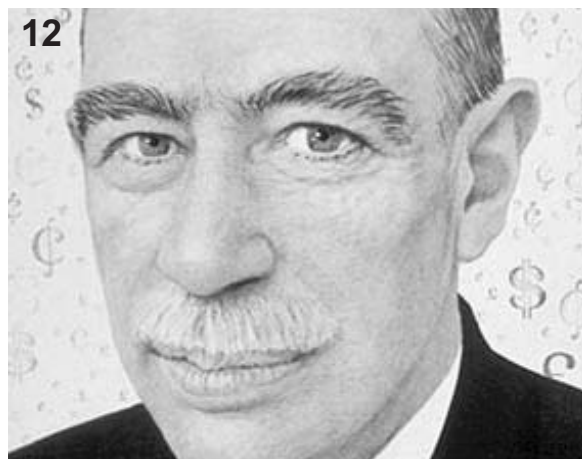
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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 4 November** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.

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

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

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

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

Leaders, get lost!

Countless column inches and seemingly endless hours of news reports have been given over to the leadership crisis the Labour Party is currently engulfed in. Speaking up for Prime Minister Tony Blair, former Home Secretary Charles Clark said Blair would stand down when he was good and ready to do so and he accused Chancellor Gordon Brown of "absolutely stupid" behaviour in challenging Blair, commenting that Brown needed first to prove his fitness to lead.

Fitness to lead? Now there's a thing. It assumes leaders have some special qualification acquired over years of study and self-sacrifice when the only real qualification is the ability to hoodwink others into thinking you possess knowledge and qualities they do not. Unlike other professions - doctors, surgeons, architects, physicists - whose skills come via many years of hard slog - politicians require none whatsoever. The only requisite credentials needed when standing for election are that you are over 21 years of age, not insane and with no recent prison record.

Despite this, many workers think we cannot function without leaders. This is a fallacy and one perpetuated by the ruling class to help them maintain their control over our lives. Indeed, so prevalent is this philosophy, that from the cradle to the grave we are taught to mistrust our own intelligence and to feel somewhat inadequate, to look up to our 'betters and superiors' (schools, church, politicians, parents etc) for their expert guidance and to accept without question the plans they draw up for our future.

It is assumed by many that leaders run the world. Well, we think it is we, the workers, who run the world. Politicians

might make government policy, which becomes law, but it is we who build and work the hospitals and schools. It is we who build the bridges, roads and railways, ports and airports; all the products that humans need to survive. It is we who produce everything from a pin to an oil-rig and provide humanity with all the services it requires - we the working class! We don't depend on leaders for these skills or for their guidance. They have no monopoly on our knowledge and intelligence or on the inventions we dream up to enhance the quality of life. If all the worlds' leaders died tomorrow, few would really miss them and society would function just as before.

The concept of leadership has emerged with class society and will end when we abolish class society, when we abolish the profit system and all that goes with it. The master class have been allowed to lead because of their control over the means of living and by virtue of their control of the education system and their monopoly of the media and other information processes.

It doesn't have to be this way. The greatest weapons we possess are our class unity, our intelligence, and our ability to question the status quo and to imagine a world fashioned in our own interests. Leaders perceive all of this to be a threat and so will do anything to keep us in a state of oblivion, dejection and dependency. Our apathy is the victory they celebrate each day. Our unwillingness to unite as a globally exploited majority and to confront them on the battlefield of ideas is the subject of their champagne toasts.

Remember this as the battle for leadership of the Labour Party heats up.



Carbon trading or social change?

July brought two publications coincidentally including articles on the same subject. Couched in terms so soothing to the save-the-planet-sympathisers, *Roughnews* advises us that "we all need to limit our personal impact on global warming" and whilst supporting responsible tourism we should give thought to "how we can redress the environmental damage caused by travel - in particular flights, the fastest growing contributor to global warming". Great! Excellent idea! This has to be good news. We can continue to fly, as often, as far as we choose and can also redress the environmental damage. And the solution? Offset your use of carbon taken from the ground by enabling a tree to be planted somewhere in the world - and on a short haul flight this "costs no more than the price of a drink".

Rough Guides is also publishing a book in October, called *Climate Change* which, miracle of miracles, is actually a 'climate neutral' book meaning that "the amount of CO2 emitted in the book's production and distribution, including everything from paper manufacture to the computers used by the author and editor and the estimated carbon footprint of the book's physical distribution has been calculated" by the carbon offset company Climate Care. To what end? So that Rough Guides (through increased retail price of the book, presumably) will pay Climate Care to 'offset' the carbon emissions by planting some trees somewhere, or by installing energy-saving light bulbs somewhere else, or a similar scheme supposed to mop up the carbon released. Apparently Rough Guides offsets all its authors' travel by paying Climate Care to take care of it.

No mention of how Climate Care benefits from the arrangement. It seems one can 'offset' all manner of nasties now, from flying, car rental, to producing CDs, all the while feeling good about 'putting something back' and being lulled into believing you have repaired the damage done. (The World Bank estimated the global carbon market to be worth \$11 billion at the end of 2005, 10 times the previous year's value.)

However, the second July publication, *New Internationalist*, has a different story to tell. It reminds us that by unlocking the carbon in fossil fuels by mining it, burning it and releasing it as active carbon it disrupts the balance of carbon in air, soil and seas. What is needed to address the problem of too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is to reduce the amount of carbon released. Oliver Rackham, a Cambridge University botanist and landscape historian is quoted thus, "Telling people to plant trees (to solve climate change) is like telling them to drink more water to keep down rising sea levels." Adam Ma'anit, the author of the article, gets to grips with reality and shows offsetting for what it is - companies being formed to take advantage of the gullible consumer, established companies jumping on the bandwagon to increase their share of the market and the misinformed punter alleviating their guilt whilst doing nothing to actually cut carbon emissions. Adam Ma'anit: "Climate change is an issue we shouldn't be 'neutral' on. Carbon offsets are at best a distraction and at worst a grandiose carbon laundering scheme." And, "The solution to climate change is social change." Any seconders?

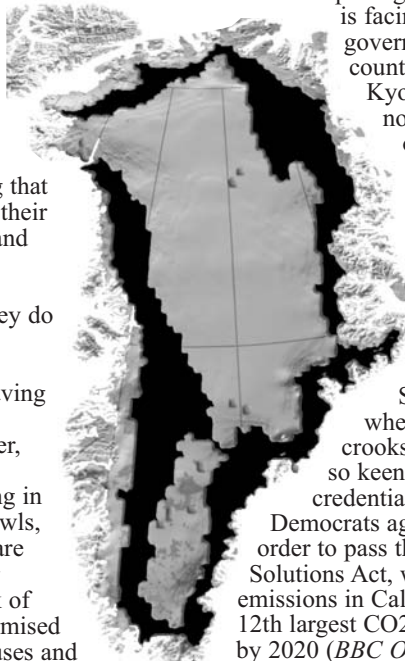
J.S.



High & Dry

Water World 1

"We were just standing around in our shorts, stunned and amazed, trying to make sense of it". Thus spoke one Inuit villager, on describing winter temperatures of 9°C that should have been -30°C (*Independent on Sunday*, 27 August). As the Arctic warms up twice as fast as the rest of the world, and sea ice has shrunk in area by a quarter and in thickness by a half, its inhabitants are discovering that their igloos are heat traps, their water supply needs wells and their workplaces need air-conditioning. Meanwhile Greenland farmers - for they do exist - are starting to grow broccoli, cauliflower and Chinese cabbage, while having to make up, among their thousand words for reindeer, some new words for the salmon which are appearing in their rivers, and the barn owls, hornets and robins which are now adventuring to the far north. What the Inuit think of global warming can be surmised by the number of their houses and snowmobiles that have started falling through the ice, and one can easily see why they think "the world is slowly disintegrating." Meanwhile in Siberia, roads and buildings built on the permafrost are starting to collapse, and the Permafrost



2004 Greenland ice melt shown in black

to do by the end of 2100 at this rate, global sea levels would rise by 6.5m (21 feet) (*BBC Online*, 11 August). If this happens, New York, New Orleans and half of Florida including Miami, Tampa and Fort Lauderdale will be underwater.

Not surprisingly perhaps, Washington is facing rebellion from state governors all over the country to stop stalling over Kyoto and do something, not least because their own oil and gas companies are already one jump ahead with 'greener' technology and need the relevant legislation to be enacted so they can capitalize on it. Leading the way is Da Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, who when not terminating crooks by state execution is so keen to display his green credentials he sided with the Democrats against his own party in order to pass the Global Warming Solutions Act, which aims to cap emissions in California, the world's 12th largest CO2 emitter, by 25 percent by 2020 (*BBC Online*, 1 September). But even Arnie is unlikely to hold back the Arctic flood, because capitalism just doesn't sit down and listen to reason, as his Republican ex-buddies know perfectly well. The reason they opposed his cosy Californian carbon-capping caper was because they knew perfectly well that unless such a plan was federal, so

Institute in Yakutsk has recently suffered a major flood (*BBC Online*, 12 September).

Greenland is the second biggest ice mass after Antarctica, with glaciers as large as Manhattan and as high as the Empire State Building, and it is now melting at a rate that has alarmed even the alarmists. Evidence from NASA satellites and ground-based researchers concluded in February 2006 that Greenland's glaciers are melting twice as fast as they were five years ago. If the ice cap were to completely disappear, which it is quite likely

that nobody could get out of it, all the investment would leak out of the state into neighbouring ones which were not required under their state law to worry so energetically about the problem.

Water World 2

While the Inuit are fast running out of ice, a third of the world's population are faced with a shortage of any water at all. The situation has arisen twenty years earlier than projections forecasted, according to a report by the International Water Management Institute in Colombo, Sri Lanka (*New Scientist*, 26 August). The report states that while in some places physical shortage of water is to blame, in others it is a question of lack of financial investment. So are they talking billion-dollar pipelines from the water sources to the dry interiors in Africa, Asia and parts of China? Not a bit. The state-of-the-art technology is, wait for it, plastic buckets and bags, lots of big ones, to catch the stuff as it falls out of the sky. Storing roof and road run-off, they argue, could double or triple food production in sub-Saharan Africa and south-east Asia. Not only that, but saving water for 'unrainy days' in this way could slow the expansion of rain-fed agriculture into virgin habitats from 60 per cent by 2050 down to 10 per cent.

The predictable response of most people reading this would be a Homer Simpson-like 'Duh'. You don't need to be an engineering genius to figure out that water butts are a good way of saving water, so why in hell aren't they doing it already, you cannot resist asking? Presumably because in the capitalist scheme of things, poor Africans, Indians and Chinese peasants don't have the price and don't rate the price even of a plastic bucket.

Water World 3

Socialists always welcome any sincere attempt to solve the world's problems, even if some of these attempts are inevitably misguided. One doesn't in all honesty expect a great contribution to be made by new-age mystics so it is no surprise that when Madonna and husband Guy Ritchie approached the UK government with a scheme to clean up nuclear waste, using a deeply mystical Kabbalah water which they claimed had received extensive testing in a Ukrainian lake, the government didn't show much interest in the Ritchies' esoteric knowledge of Jewish mystical liquids and in fact showed them the door (*New Scientist*, 26 August). One might expect however that the government official who recounted this story would show the appropriate respect for such eminent celebrities, or at least a cool and precise scientific detachment. Instead, the official described the encounter as follows: "It was like a crank call.... The scientific mechanisms and principles were just bollocks." Lovely to see scientists descend to plain English occasionally.

Ted Grant

Dear Editors

Following on from your obituary of Ted Grant, the Trotskyist founder of the "entryist" Militant Tendency (September *Socialist Standard*), I agree that he was never a revolutionary; but just another reformer masquerading as a revolutionary.

I first heard Ted Grant speak at a meeting in High Holborn, of the so-called Revolutionary Communist Party, just before its demise probably in 1947. At this meeting, I heard for the first time the claim that the Soviet Union was not socialist, or even a "degenerated workers' state", but in fact a dictatorial form of state capitalism. A member of the audience (of about 100) got up and forcefully, as well as persistently, much to the annoyance of Grant and the other Trotskyist speakers, and argued that the economy of the USSR was state capitalist, and that the workers and peasants there were exploited in much the same way as elsewhere. Shortly after, two of the leaders who were at the meeting, Jock Haston and Tony Cliff, both accepted the claim that Soviet Russia was state capitalist.

And who was the speaker from the audience? I learned later, when I knew the SPGB (from meetings on Clapham Common), that it was a man named Sammy Cash, a well-known and active member of the Socialist Party.

As you noted, Ted Grant was ousted from the Militant Tendency by a man called Peter Taaffe, a thoroughly dishonest individual who claims that his existing group is the "socialist party", known by the most appropriate acronym of SPEW.

PETER E. NEWELL, Colchester, Essex

Dear Editors,

The obituary on Ted Grant by DAP rather impressed me with its honesty and, even, generosity. I met Grant and Haston in 1948 at the RCP HQ on the Harrow Road. Haston was a fun fellow; Grant seemed a bit like a frustrated priest.

RICHARD MONTAGUE, Ballymena, Co. Antrim.

Royalty - an irrelevance?

Dear Editors,

On the road to Socialism there are powerful institutions in the way. Monarchy, with all its associated inequalities and public loyalty, is a powerful support for capitalism. It embodies wealth and privilege alongside emotional adoration by the poor. Cromwell managed to remove a king, but soon after his death the monarchy was re-established.

Why has it been as successful as an institution? It no doubt has its own methods for self-survival (modern PR experts, and years of experience of being a monarch, plus perhaps a genuine love for the British people). Yet the institution can only survive with public consent. None of the political parties that have attained power has bothered to question in any serious way the existence of the monarchy; partly I assume because they dread the loyalty of the British people.

We have all been socialised into a culture that respects the royal family, at least in principle (people may frown at certain incidents with the royals, but basically accept their existence). Submission to the monarchy is encouraged from the cradle to the grave, and even if cynical, a person may find it

difficult to resist a feeling of pride when a member of the royal family visits their factory or local area. Celebrities have occasionally returned MBEs, but they are few and far between.

Vast arguments are put forward to justify the royal family (e.g. encourages tourism and hence the pockets of the people) We are 'immersed' in royalist propaganda and culture. Yet how can it be right for one family to be so well provided for (houses, land, wealth, public adoration etc) when other families struggle from day to day?

They also assist and legitimise other people who have unfair amounts of wealth (in the past kings and queens have helped each other in difficult circumstances - when the peasants are getting above themselves for instance).

The institution also puts unfair pressure on the members of the royal family. The horses the Queen must have sat on horses on rainy days to fulfil her royal duties; and the boredom of watching parade after parade! The lack of privacy - even minor scandals blown out of all proportion, and the difficulty of moving in privacy from A to B.

We are so 'brainwashed' into the advantages of monarchy, that we grossly underestimate the disadvantages. Yet it take courage for a politician to suggest to suggest we abolish it - the inaction of millions of indoctrinated people can be a formidable thing to experience. Other politicians would condemn his very words (in the hope of gaining votes for their own parties!).

Are we all involved in a 'mother-figure' complex (or for ex-public school types - 'matron')? Do we feel more comfortable knowing she is then looking after us? Or are we being childish? Shouldn't we liberate her

continued on page 18

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Left, Right and Centre

As the Party Conference season begins we look at politicians' politics.

Today politics is about achieving political power, with the main political parties contesting to maximise their share of votes in a political market in the same way as competing companies do in their areas of commercial interest. Power and influence has become an end in itself for political parties because those interests that traditionally separated them have been absorbed into the tapestry of modern capitalism. In Britain, for example, the Conservative and Unionist Party evolved out of the Tory interest which was committed to the landed aristocracy, the upper class, and those institutions like the church that promoted the concept of the 'divine right of kings' and the social stratification of society.

As the middle class - the bourgeoisie

or capitalist class - evolved and gained strength economically, it challenged the aristocracy for political control in order to throw off the impeding legal structures of feudalism which confined and restricted its continued economic expansion. The political interest representing the burgeoning class interests of the bourgeoisie was known as the Whigs and subsequently evolved into the Liberal Party.

In a property-orientated society such as feudalism or capitalism all real wealth is produced and can only be produced by the labour power of a subject class. The patents granting ownership of land to the feudal lords and barons may have derived from a parasitic monarchy but the wealth and privilege enjoyed by the lords and ladies of the manor was founded on the

labour of their feudal serfs.

Similarly, the new revolutionary class of capitalists needed the labourer to work their engines of production; the serf would be converted from a feudal slave into a wage slave under the illusion that they were being given their freedom. Obviously, since the labourer was the key element in the wealth-producing function of both the feudal establishment and the new capitalist system of social organisation, the terms governing the future control of labour were a primary element of contention between the old order and that of the nascent capitalist class. This conflict of interest between the landed interest and the interests of the bourgeoisie was reflected in the post-revolutionary world of capitalist politics.



“the left’ have traditionally supported the main Labour or social-democratic parties in general elections only to become opposed to their policies when they formed governments”

Left and right

The terms 'Left' and 'Right' as political designations emerged innocuously out of the seating arrangements in the Legislative Assembly of Revolutionary France in 1791, when the royalist Feuillants sat on the right side of the chamber and the radical Montagnards occupied the seats on the left. This almost incidental occurrence was to bring the terms 'left' and 'right' into the lexicon of politics, where inevitably their wide generality would make them universally both an instrument of confusion and often a means of deliberate obfuscation.

By the middle of the 19th century the expression of political conservatism was regarded as 'right wing' while their liberal opponents were designated 'left wing'. It was not solely, however as labels for political parties that the terms were to bedevil political consciousness but increasingly the most irrelevant matters that could be construed as having political moment found description within the spectrum of Left and Right.

So when the German and French socialist movements tactically retained programmes of 'immediate demands' - reformist strategies intended to bring about what they hoped would be the piecemeal evolution of capitalism into socialism - they inevitably became the political Left. The British Labour Party when it was formed in 1906, unlike its continental cousins, did not choose reformism as a tactic but was founded on a strategy that held that inevitably and gradually capitalism could be reformed into socialism. It became the principal focus of the Left in Britain, lingering long after the Labour Party's pathetic failure to exercise any real influence in government when it first got the opportunity to do so in 1923.

Inter-Left enmity

For decades Labour and Social Democratic parties throughout the world have contended for political office and the power of government on the claim that they were acting as bona-fide socialists. The multiplicity of left-wing groups, 'tendencies' and parties, like the various Trotskyist organisations and the fragmented periphery of 'the left', have traditionally supported the main Labour or social-democratic parties in general elections only to become implacably opposed to their policies when they formed governments.

The basis of this inter-left enmity is always related not to socialism but to aspects of capitalism and is based on the chastening reality of political power. In fact politics within the left is similar to politics outside the left: it is all about capitalism and its endemic problems. Not only that

but right across the entire spectrum of politics from so-called Left to Right and through Centre the basic ideas that are perceived as representing Left and Right have been adopted and abandoned by parties of differing political complexions.

British politics currently illustrates this point: the Blair government is pursuing viciously authoritarian policies and backing the aggressive expansionism of a particularly vicious United States establishment. Judged by the absurd yardstick for determining positions on the swingometer of Left and Right such policies would be seen as extremely right-wing. Conversely, the new Tory leader, David Cameron, is trying to lead his party back to favour with the electorate with gestures of sympathy for the poor, the oppressed and the intellectually deprived which he believes might fool people into the belief that the Tories really do care. In fact policies wrongly seen by the pundits to be essential parts of Labour's political stock-in-trade.

Historically, all three of the big political parties in Britain have advocated or used nationalisation -- once the sacred cow of the British Left - when economic circumstances have shown a need for such a policy. Again, all three parties accepted the economic thinking underwriting the welfare state and all three have accepted the Keynesian economic philosophy when it was wrongly believed to be the panacea for the intractable ills of the system and

especially the problem of managing economic demand.

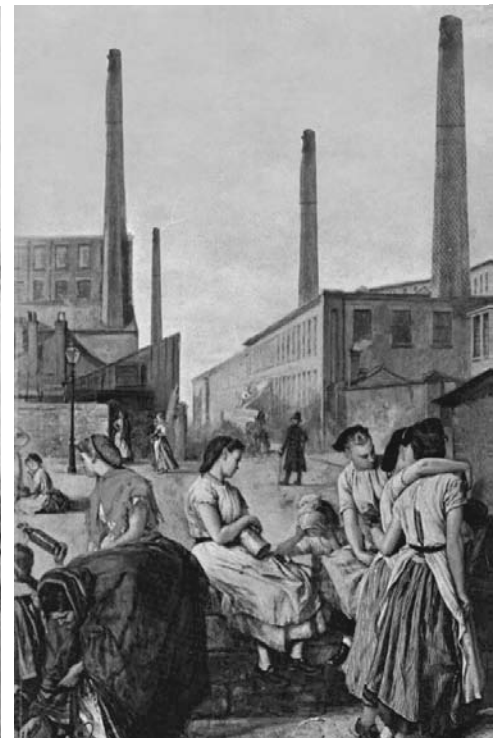
Winning elections

The reality of politics today is that political parties represent the corporate face of organised groups of career-orientated politicians whose cushy, well-paid jobs are dependent on selling old and failed political formulae dressed in worthless verbiage to a gullible electorate. It is not a question of honesty, sincerity or sagacity; wise and sincere people elected to government may indeed be able to soften some of the nasty features that capitalism throws up, but a government endowed with a surfeit of wisdom and sincerity could not make a system of economic anarchy and competition - a system predicated on the exploitation of the many by the few - run in the common interest.

Mere poverty and absolute destitution, the gigantic organisation of mass murder, which is war, homelessness, crime, social alienation and all the other features of the capitalist way of life are not caused by stupid, brutal or insincere politicians; they are endemic to capitalism. That is the demonstrable assumption on which the case for socialism - our case - is based; that is why we say it is social and economic system that has got to be changed and not its political functionaries. ■

RICHARD MONTAGUE

“the serf would be converted from a feudal slave into a wage slave under the illusion that they were being given their freedom”



Bored with politics?



Politics is not just about the antics of career politicians - or at least doesn't have to be.

If you ask people "what is a party?" they are likely to reply something along the lines of "a group of people who want to get elected". If you then ask them why they think these people want to get elected, the reply, if they're feeling charitable, will be "to do things for the country" or "to help other people". If they're not feeling charitable, they'll say "to help themselves" or that "they're just in for what they can get".

The truth - both as to what people think and what politicians want - will be something in between. Since up to 70 percent of people turn out to vote at elections and vote for politicians and their parties, they can't really think that all that politicians want to do is to line their own pockets or further their own careers. They must be giving them some credit for wanting to do more, otherwise they'd be exposing themselves as fools for voting for them. And some politicians can show that they genuinely want to help other people, while at the same time of course making a career and some money for themselves.

Being a politician is a sort of profession, like a lawyer or a doctor. A politician's trade is to get into parliament or the local council to run the administrative side of capitalism. To do this, they must get elected and, to get elected, they must promise to do things for people; they must find out what's worrying people and then promise to do something about it.

This is why parties don't need principles. Or, put another way, they only need one principle (if it can be called that) and that's "get elected". In the past some parties, the Labour Party for instance, used to campaign to try to win people over to

their point of view. Not any more. Today politicians just promise people what they want to hear.

Although Blair, Mandelson and New Labour earned themselves a reputation for cynicism by the way they raised this to a fine art, actually the best practitioners of this have been the Lib-Dems, who've long had "focus groups" to tell them what to promise people in some area they've targeted. Now the Tories under Cameron are practising this in a more serious way too.

This kind of politics - which is dominant today - rests on a number of assumptions and has a number of consequences.

1. It accepts the status quo. It accepts capitalism and seeks merely to work within it. Politics becomes a question of choosing the best capitalism-management team from amongst competing groups of politicians.

2. Politics becomes a profession. You vote for a politician to do something for you and you reward them for the service by voting for them.

3. Politics becomes an activity in which only a minority - the professional politicians - participate. Most people's only involvement in politics is, literally, once every few years when they go and put an X on a ballot paper. Then they go home and let the person elected get on with the job.

4. Elections become more and more a sort of referendum, a plebiscite on the record of the outgoing government or council. People's participation in politics becomes simply giving a thumbs up or a thumbs down to the outgoing administration. If they don't mind what they've done, they vote them in again. If they're not happy then they vote in some

other lot.

Politics becomes a spectacle in which people are just passive spectators watching the goings-on of politicians. The media - especially TV - play to this, presenting politics in between elections as a soap. But it is not even a good spectacle. It's boring and the actors are all second and third rate. It doesn't work either. Nothing seems to change and nothing does change. The same old problems continue, with the professional politicians only being able to tinker about and patch things up a little.

The end result is that politics is seen as completely boring and that people don't want to know about it, except in the few weeks before a general election. People know that voting doesn't change anything and that the only power they have is to vote the Ins Out (or In again) or vote the Outs In; to change the management team, while their day-to-day lives are unaffected and unchanged.

No wonder people become apathetic, resigned and cynical.

A different politics

Can things change? Yes, they could but it's not going to be through conventional politics, only through a quite different kind of politics. A politics which rejects and aims to change the status quo. A politics which involves people participating and not leaving things up to others to do something for them.

Besides involving people surrendering their power to act to others, conventional politics is based on the illusion that what happens depends on what the politicians in power do; that politicians really do control things; that politics is in the driving seat. But this isn't the case. It is the way society is organised to produce things that is the main factor determining the way we live and what happens - and what doesn't happen. In other words, what is important is the sort of social and economic system we live under, not which party of professional politicians controls the government. That's why changing governments changes nothing.

The present system - capitalism, with its class privilege, production for profit and coercive state machine - is by nature incapable of being made to serve the common good; as a profit-making system it has to put making profits before meeting people's needs. Before we can think about achieving a better world, it must go. What is needed, as a framework within which to solve the economic and social problems we now face, is a classless society where productive resources are held in common, where there's production to satisfy people's needs and not for profit and democratic administration not government over people. In a word, socialism (in its original sense).

When more and more people realise this they will begin organising for it, in the places where they work, in the neighbourhoods where they live, in the various clubs and associations they are members of, but, above all, they will need

to organise politically. Who says "politically" also says "political party". So we are talking about a "socialist party".

Unfortunately so associated has the word "party" come to be with conventional politics that many people (including our anarchist critics) imagine that we, too, are proposing just another organisation of political leaders for people to follow; that we're saying "vote for us and we'll bring in socialism for you". But we're not. By "socialist party" we mean a party of people who want socialism, people organised democratically to win control of political power for socialism.

Obviously, a mass socialist party like this does not yet exist, but it is our view that, for socialism to be established, it should. Without having any delusions of grandeur, we try to organise ourselves today in our small party in the same way we think that a mass socialist party should organise itself: without leaders and with major decisions being made democratically either by a referendum of the whole membership or by a conference of mandated delegates and other decisions by elected committees. The "socialist party" would be a mass movement of people who wanted socialism, not a party of professional politicians or a party of professional revolutionaries or even of people who wanted to serve the people.

The same goes for participation in elections (since a mass socialist party would contest elections). Here too, we try to anticipate how we think a mass socialist party, when it emerges, should behave. Its candidates should not seek to be leaders, separate from those who vote for them, but should be standing as delegates to be mandated by those who want socialism. This is why when we stand in elections all we advocate is socialism. Not reforms of capitalism, not promises to do things for people, as the conventional parties do.

If you want a better world, you are going to have to bring it about yourselves. That's our basic message. It's no good following leaders, whether professional politicians or professional revolutionaries. In fact, following anybody (not even us) won't get you anywhere. The only way is to carry out a do-it-yourself revolution on a completely democratic basis. Democratic in the sense that that's what the majority want. And democratic in the sense that that majority, rather than following leaders, organises itself on the basis of mandated and recallable delegates carrying out decisions reached after a full and free discussion and vote.

That's what politics can be, and should be. And has to be if things are ever to change. ■

ADAM BUICK

“Being a politician is a sort of profession, like a lawyer or a doctor”



Politicians? A shower, an absolute ruddy shower!

Will Labour lose?

The present Labour government appears to have run out of steam, but trading one group of career politicians for another is not the answer.

An astute observer once said "governments are not elected...they are dismissed". According to this view, after a party has had a period in power the electorate consciously aims to get rid of it by voting for a rival party in a decision regarded as the "lesser of two evils". And it is undoubtedly true that every government - regardless of political banner - has always ended by alienating the electorate that once supported it. Many voters believe politicians are dishonest or have become cynical about elections, reasoning that "60-seconds of democracy" is small recompense for five years of neglect and policies that rarely express their preferences. If elections are so meaningless, some reflect, then there can be little point in voting - a sentiment borne out by low electoral turnout.

Despite being unable to find lasting solutions to workers' problems, political parties must always try to combat voter disillusionment. Behaving like chameleons, they must search for ways to improve their

"The Electoral Reform Society concluded the Labour government faces "wipe-out" in the next general election."

image, reinvigorate old policies and give the appearance that this time things will be different, this time the electorate will be given exactly what it wants. Before the 1997 general election the Labour Party successfully engineered its own metamorphosis, re-branding policies and redefining its agenda. The commitment to nationalisation enshrined in the 1918 Party

constitution was abolished and Trade Union influence over policy - always more mythical than real - was publicly abandoned. Its image, thus transformed, seemed revitalised and business, media and the electorate acclaimed the party that now called itself New Labour.

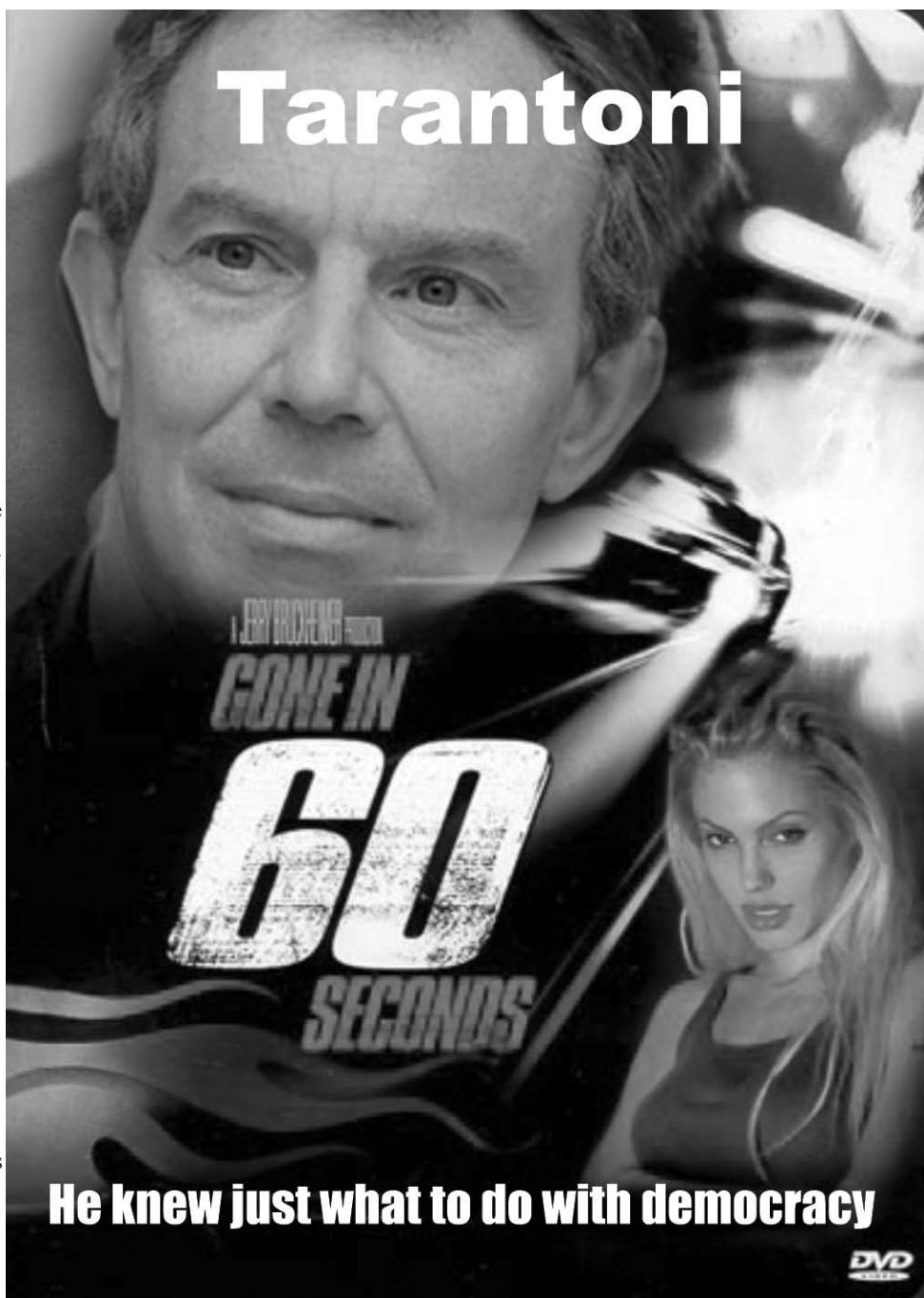
But nine years after the Labour Party was enthusiastically swept into government, the same electorate cannot wait to dismiss them. Reviewing the May local elections results the Electoral Reform Society concluded the Labour government faces "wipe-out" in the next general election and "predicts that Labour stand to lose 149 of its present 355 MPs bringing its commons strength down to 206 - even worse than 1983". Ministers have responded with conciliatory messages that Labour will listen more closely in future and, in the

words of John Prescott, "renew itself after nine years in government" (*Observer*, 28 May).

In the third week of June this year, Labour's tattered image took another knock when an Ipsos Mori poll revealed that one in four Labour supporters wants their party to lose the next election. The poll deduced that "the leadership is becoming increasingly divorced from its own grass roots, 23 per cent agree Labour should be kicked out of power". Supporters wanted the party to experience "a period out of office to rethink what they stand for and what their vision is for the future". A majority of those polled expects the next general election to end with either a hung

parliament or a Tory majority, believing a re-launched Conservative Party to be more in touch with what ordinary people think. In the wake of hospital cutbacks, Home Office scandals and the 'peerages for cash' fiasco, Hazel Blears conceded, "the voters are angry that we have taken our eye off the ball" (*Observer*, 18 June).

At the end of June, Labour Party fortunes went from bad to worse. In the double election in Blaenau Gwent - where Parliamentary and Welsh Assembly by-elections were held simultaneously - an embittered electorate took revenge by voting down both Labour Party candidates. The elections were prompted by the death of Peter Law, who had defected from



Labour and succeeded in overturning a 19,000 Labour majority in 2005. Until it was lost, Blaenau Gwent, whose past MPs include Aneurin Bevan and Michael Foot, was regarded as Labour's safest seat. Defeat in the Assembly election denied Labour of the majority it hoped to regain in the Welsh Assembly.

The wave of disillusionment is not just confined to Labour voters, however, with disaffection spreading inside the Labour Party itself. Labour Party membership has declined dramatically since 1997 and is now below the 200,000 mark - the lowest level since Ramsay MacDonald split the party in the 1930s. The membership has grown weary of being implicated in what the media call a "conspiracy of lies," and resentful of arrogant leadership.

A YouGov poll presented to the Compass conference on 17 June found that only 25 percent of Labour Party members believe they influence Party policy, while three-quarters felt policy had been hijacked by rich donors whose influence has grown as membership has shrunk. The Labour Party, desperately short of funds and like many of the electorate struggling with debt - estimated at £27 million -, must either depend on millionaires or turn to state funding, a move not popular with the public.

Aware of growing hostility, many senior members are distancing themselves from Prime Minister Blair by announcing that the Labour Party under Brown's leadership will revitalise itself and re-brand unpalatable policies. "The trouble with the current approach is that we will go out of power for 15 years," grumbled Michael Willis, speaking to the Compass conference. Like many, he blames Iraq and Blair's presidential style for the electorate's resentment (*Guardian*, 19 June). Every effort is being made to show 'clear water' between Labour under Blair and what Labour might be like under Brown. "Too many traditional Labour supporters felt the government had taken their goodwill for granted and said government was getting more difficult," said Ed Balls, Economic Secretary to the Treasury. Brown's political allies promise greater Party equality, reducing dominance of Whitehall and "restoring progressive politics" (*Guardian*, 19 June).

But if forecasters can be believed it now seems likely, irrespective of who actually leads the Party, that Labour will lose the next general election. Yet does it really matter which party forms the next government?

Capitalism is a splintered society; divided not just by sectional ownership of the means of production but by the economic rivalry of independent states striving to exercise authority over given geographical areas. Conventional political parties endorse the framework of capitalism and compete to win control over the state and to administer the economic system within its boundaries, which necessarily means perpetuating the wages system and the persistent hardship for wage and salary earners. The policies propounded by these

“Labour's tattered image took another knock when a poll revealed that one in four Labour supporters wants their party to lose the next election.”

parties are similar because they are manifestations of the same political imperative - a continuation of capitalism - and are distinguishable only to the extent that they propose different organisation methods to administer the same economic system.

Voters vote governments out because they appear incompetent, incapable of finding solutions to the daily problems that confronts wage and salary earners. But government can never solve these problems because their permanent solution lies only in the abolition of capitalism and the wages system. Economic laws that politicians are powerless to change and leave little room for manoeuvre determine what politicians do and how they must react. It is not the deceitfulness of politicians that is the problem but rather the economic structure of society.

But it is not just political parties that refuse to think outside the framework of capitalism. Most wage and salary earners rarely question the structure of society and passively support the system that always works against them. In misguided expressions of defiance that flow from frustration and lack of understanding, voters repeatedly swap Labour governments for Conservative, or Conservative governments for Labour - as they have on seven separate occasions since the second world war - in the hope that it will somehow make a difference. They are always disappointed by the outcome. Mandating a political party to administer capitalism means that workers surrender political power to their class enemy and condone the continuation of their own exploitation, their insecurity and their poverty - a lesson that workers seem unable to grasp as the same mistake is slavishly repeated over and over again.

But while trading one group of careerist politicians for another can never be the answer, changing society's economic structure is the only answer.

Capitalism exists only because workers allow it to exist. Changing the structure of society, however, is not as simple as changing political allegiance to a party. Capitalism is based firmly on a principle of leadership, where a minority in secret makes decisions and the excluded majority is told what they should do and how they should think. Changing the world's economic structure by converting the means of production from class ownership to common ownership requires that workers individually understand what they want and actively combine to change their condition. Socialism cannot be delivered by leaders and is achievable only by the concerted action of a politically conscious mass movement without direction or leaders, for only then will the majority become the decision-makers.

The task may be daunting but must begin somewhere. Workers would do well to start by considering whether capitalism - under any political party - is really the future they want. ■

STEVE TROTT



Cooking the Books

Salt sellers

Doctors and nutritionists have long known that too much salt is bad for you as, by raising blood pressure, it increases the risk of strokes and heart attacks. So, it would seem only

normal that a body bearing the name "Food Standards Agency" should concern itself with the amount of salt that food companies put into the foodstuffs they offer for sale.

But the Food Standards Agency has to operate within the context of a capitalist economy where all businesses, including food companies, aim to make the biggest profits possible on behalf of their shareholders. As a result it has to be careful not to try to set "unrealistic" standards, i.e. standards that would reduce profitability.

In 2005 the FSA put out a consultative document with proposals to achieve a 40 percent reduction in people's average salt intake by 2010. The food industry was appalled and immediately began lobbying to have the proposals watered down.

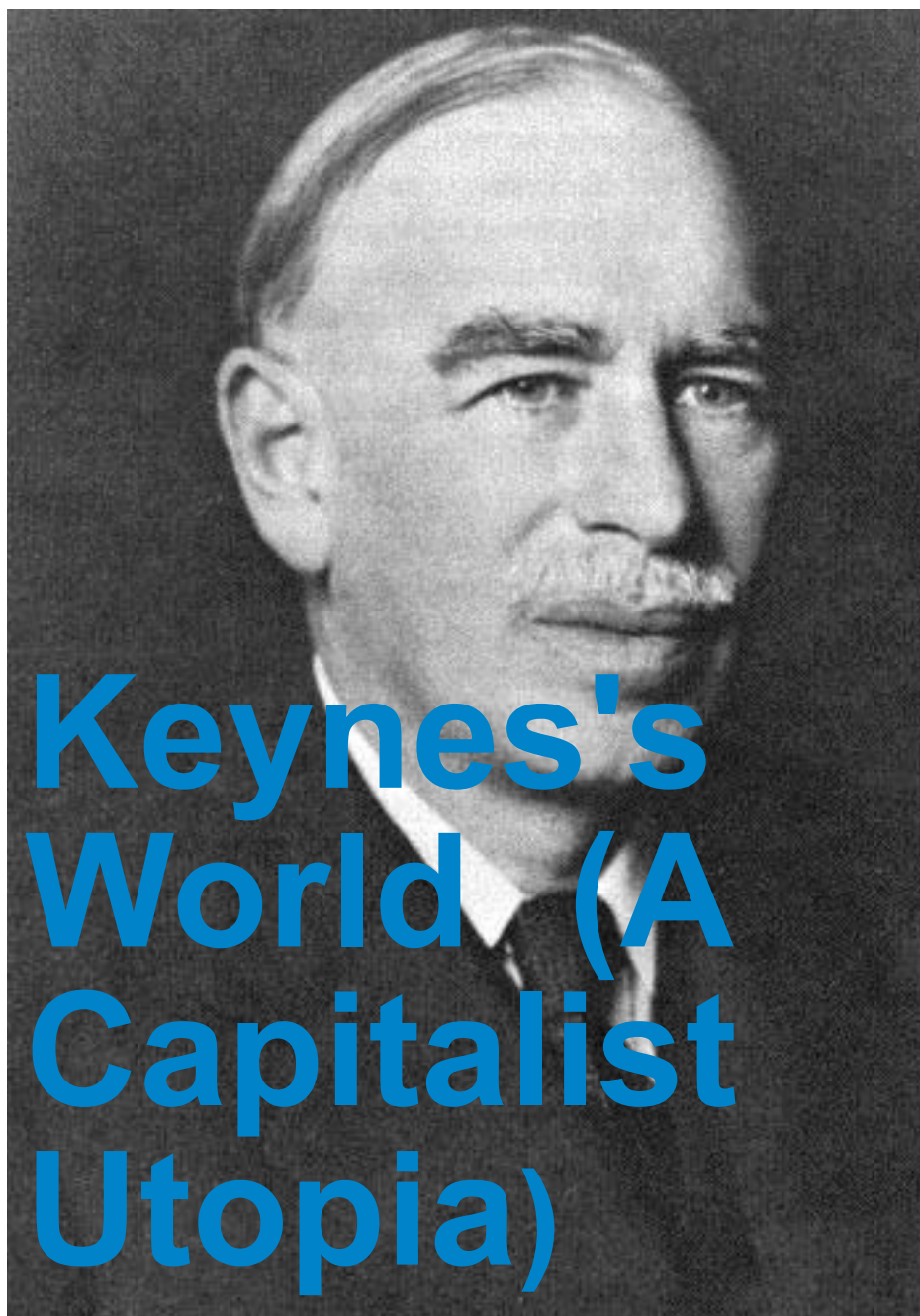
Salt has been used to preserve food since the dawn of civilisation and before. It also adds a distinctive flavour to food. The food industry was quick to seize on this in their counter-arguments. Reducing the salt content of their products, they said, would increase the risk of food poisoning (as if, these days, there weren't alternatives to salt as a food preservative). It would, they went on, make their products less tasty to consumers, whose interests of course they put above all else, etc, etc.

Times journalist Dominic Kennedy used the Freedom of Information Act to gain access to the documents submitted to the FSA by the food industry. What even he called "the most nakedly honest" argument came from Nestlé who submitted that:

"Salt is a major constituent in many products - and it is a cheap ingredient. Reduction in salt levels, even by a very small amount, significantly increases the overall cost of manufacturing the product, mainly because the ingredients used for the replacement of salt are much more expensive, e.g., herbs or meat extracts" (*Times*, 3 August. See also timesonline.co.uk/britain, search for "pro-salt campaign").

In the end the FSA agreed to lower its proposed standards. Hence the title of Kennedy's article "How the salt campaign was scuppered". In a society geared to human welfare, if doctors and nutritionists concluded that too much of some ingredient (whether salt, or sugar or fat since it's the same story there) was detrimental to people's health then, production not being in the hands of profit-seeking enterprises, the amount of the ingredient going in manufactured foods would be fixed taking this, and only this, into account.

But capitalism is not a society geared to serving human welfare.



Keynes's World (A Capitalist Utopia)

Maynard Keynes imagined a society that would be centred on the pursuit of enjoyment rather than accumulation, but like other reformists he couldn't fathom a future without money and commodities.

Markets, profit, money, and private property seem as natural as the air we breathe to most people. Like Adam Smith, they believe that the "propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another" is an aspect of our human nature. So it is naturally assumed that commodity exchange

will continue to exist in the future, and that the only realistic way to overcome the problems we face is through a reform of capitalism. This is the "common sense" of today. And from this perspective, socialists appear to be unrealistic dreamers.

Certainly, socialists do dream of a new form of society, but our conclusion that fundamental social change is necessary is based on an understanding of today's reality. We know from experience and study that the serious problems which humanity faces, such as poverty and war, arise naturally from the capitalist system itself. History also teaches us that other forms of society have preceded capitalism, so this system is neither eternal nor rooted in "human nature." And we also have an idea of how to achieve socialism by means of a revolutionary political movement.

The aim of this article, however, is not so much to refute the claim that socialists are unrealistic, as to throw this same criticism back at those who believe capitalism will somehow work out its problems in the future. This reformist view, quite frankly, is a daydream. To concoct their capitalist utopia, reformists have to overlook the nature of capitalism as a class-

divided system of production for profit, not to mention the fact that profit stems from surplus value obtained from workers.

The unreality of the reformists' standpoint becomes clear if we look at any of their depictions of a better future under capitalism. The view of the economist J.M. Keynes seems as good as any to consider, particularly since his stature has been high (at times) among both capitalists and self-styled leftists.

Keynes's prediction

In a 1930 article entitled "*Economic Possibilities For Our Grandchildren*", Keynes predicts a far better world in a hundred years. He does not attach any label to his future society circa 2030, but it is said to be a world where the "economic problem" has been solved. This is defined as the problem of scarcity, which he describes as the central economic problem that has confronted humanity throughout history. Overcoming scarcity will mean that people's "absolute needs" (as opposed to subjective needs) are fully met.

The solution to the problem of scarcity, Keynes says, is a continuation of the capital accumulation and technical innovation that have been raising the standard of living since the dawn of the "modern age" (capitalism) following centuries of stagnation. He views capital accumulation in material terms, noting that if capital increases at two percent a year, "the capital equipment of the world will have increased by a half in twenty years, and seven and a half times in a hundred years." He encourages the reader to "think of this in terms of material things - houses, transport, and the like."

This steady capitalist growth is the basis for Keynes's bold prediction that the standard of life in "progressive countries" in a hundred years' time "will be between four and eight times as high as it is to-day," even adding that it "would not be foolish to contemplate the possibility of a far greater progress still." Expressed in qualitative terms, he says that once economic scarcity has been overcome, we will be able to "devote our further energies to non-economic purposes."

What scarcity?

Before further examining Keynes's solution to "economic scarcity," it is worth considering whether scarcity, at least as he understands it, is indeed our main problem.

Keynes is hardly alone in raising the problem of scarcity. In a popular university textbook by Harvard professor Gregory Mankiw, who chaired the Council of Economic Advisors under George W. Bush, students are informed on the very first page that, "Scarcity means that society has limited resources and therefore cannot produce all the goods and services people wish to have - a society cannot give every individual the highest standard of living to which he or she might aspire" (*Principles of Economics*).

Here this problem of scarcity is both an explanation and a justification for why some people have a less than ideal life. But if society's resources are so limited, how can the rich (like Mankiw himself), and the ultra-rich, justify their own disproportionate consumption? The fact that a single individual, Warren Buffett, has 35 billion dollars on hand to donate to a charity run by another multi-billionaire, suggests that the "scarcity" some of us face does not stem from the limited resources of society.

The fact that the economic scarcity of certain individuals is an artificial condition, related to class divisions, should have been perfectly clear to Keynes. Already a century earlier, the Swiss economist Sismondi had been shocked to see first-hand how miserable workers in England were despite the tremendous advances in the output of production. The artificial nature of "scarcity" under capitalism becomes even clearer during a crisis, when factories remain idle because production is not profitable and commodities rot on shelves for a lack of customers.

Keynes wrote his article at the outset of the Great Depression, so he could not completely ignore the mass unemployment of the time. Yet, in his article, unemployment is dismissed as "growing-pains from over-rapid changes" or a "temporary phase of maladjustment." He was confident that in the long run things would work out, which is a bit rich coming from a man who reminded us that "in the long run we are all dead." Today, more than 75 years later, these growing pains continue. The "scarcity" resulting from unemployment seems unlikely to end any time soon.

Keynes's way of framing the problem in terms of scarcity, and finding the solution in increased production, only makes sense if it is assumed that we are already dealing with a socialist society. That is, in socialism, where there is social ownership of the means of production and the aim of production is to directly meet human needs, any expansion of material production or increase in labour productivity would potentially raise the standard of living for every member of society.

Things are a bit different under capitalism. We know from experience, for example, that the introduction of new technologies or increased productivity will not necessarily result in a shorter working day or improved standard of living. This seemingly illogical state of affairs is not surprising when we consider that technical improvements are only made to gain a competitive advantage that will result in higher profits.

Keynes chooses to ignore the obvious fact that the pursuit of profit underlies

technical innovation, making it seem instead as if every increase in production under capitalism will directly raise the standard of living for the population as a whole, bringing us that much closer to the end of scarcity.

Neighbourly thinking

How will we know when economic scarcity has become a thing of the past? Keynes writes: "The course of affairs will simply be that there will be ever larger and larger classes and groups of people from whom problems of economic necessity have been practically removed. The critical difference will be realised when this state of affairs becomes so general that the nature of one's duty to one's neighbour is changed."

He argues that the number of affluent members of society will increase to the point that people's way of thinking changes. Instead of being "economically purposive" (selfish), people will be generous towards each other. It is not at all clear, however, how "general" this state of affairs will have to be for a magical transformation in consciousness to take place.

The absurdity of Keynes's dream speaks for itself. Why would a person suddenly begin acting in a neighbourly fashion one day, if the competitive system that had fostered his avarice were still very much in place? Moreover, it takes considerable wealth today for a person to be able to devote his or her "energies to non-economic purposes." And even those able to retire from the business world, to engage in philanthropy and the like, appoint other "economically purposive" characters to manage their affairs. At any rate, few people are satisfied even after their "absolute needs" have been met, and most seek to accumulate a bit more just to be on the safe side. It should be obvious that the general way people think and behave will only fundamentally change once we are free of the insecurity that the competitive capitalist system breeds.

To his credit, Keynes does seem a bit disgusted by the selfish way people act under capitalism in its present form. But in a strange twist of logic, he argues that selfish behaviour will some day set us free from selfishness. In fact, he warns us not to start acting too generous, too soon: "But beware! The time for all this is not yet.

For at least another hundred years we must pretend to ourselves and to every one that fair is foul and foul

is fair, for foul is useful and fair is not. Avarice and usury and precaution must be our gods for a little longer. For only they can lead us out of the tunnel of economic necessity into daylight." Apparently, the road to paradise is paved with bad intentions.

"Economic bliss"

Keynes's depiction of what he jokingly refers to as "economic bliss" is very brief, but he does manage to effectively contrast the stunted nature of present-day life with a far more civilised existence in the future. He notes, for example, that people will begin living for the sake of enjoying the present, rather than endlessly accumulating for tomorrow. Instead of the fawning over the rich, people would value those "who can teach us how to pluck the hour and the day virtuously and well, the delightful people who are capable of taking the direct enjoyment in things."

Keynes also points out that even after we are free of economic scarcity, many people will have a strong desire to work. He suggests, for instance, "three-hour shifts or a fifteen-hour week" would probably be "quite enough to satisfy the old Adam in most of us!" It is not clear whether this work is actually necessary, or just a way for people to occupy their time, but Keynes is right to suggest that work can be a source of human satisfaction (if taken in the proper dosage), which refutes the idea that no one would bother to work in socialism.

Compared to the *joie de vivre* that characterizes life in his future world, Keynes says that today's love of money "as a possession" would seem a "somewhat disgusting morbidity, one of those semi-criminal, semi-pathological propensities which one hands over with a shudder to the specialists in mental disease." And he looks forward to the day when "all kinds of social customs and economic practices" that are "distasteful and unjust" can at last be discarded. Although, true to form, he feels obliged to remind us that such habits are "tremendously useful in promoting the accumulation of capital," which is his motive force of history.

Many of Keynes's observations, ironically enough, are applicable to life in socialism, but his clear assumption is that the system of production from the days of economic scarcity remains more or less intact. Even though money will no longer be loved as a possession, it will still be cherished "as a means to the enjoyments and realities of life." In other words, people will still have to pay for whatever they consume. This naturally means that products are produced as "commodities" for exchange, and therefore the means of production are in the hands of private individuals or groups of individuals. Keynes even admits that there will be people in the future with "intense, unsatisfied purposiveness who will blindly pursue wealth," although he assures us that we "will no longer be under any obligation to applaud and encourage them."

In short, Keynes looks to a future where people are generous and enjoy life to the fullest even though production is carried out with profit in mind and money still makes the world go round. To which socialists can only respond: Dream on! ■

MICHAEL SCHAUERTE



Zionism: myth and reality

Zionism misled many Jewish workers with its promise of a "homeland for Jews". A recent book examines the fate of the million or so non-Jews in the state Zionism established.

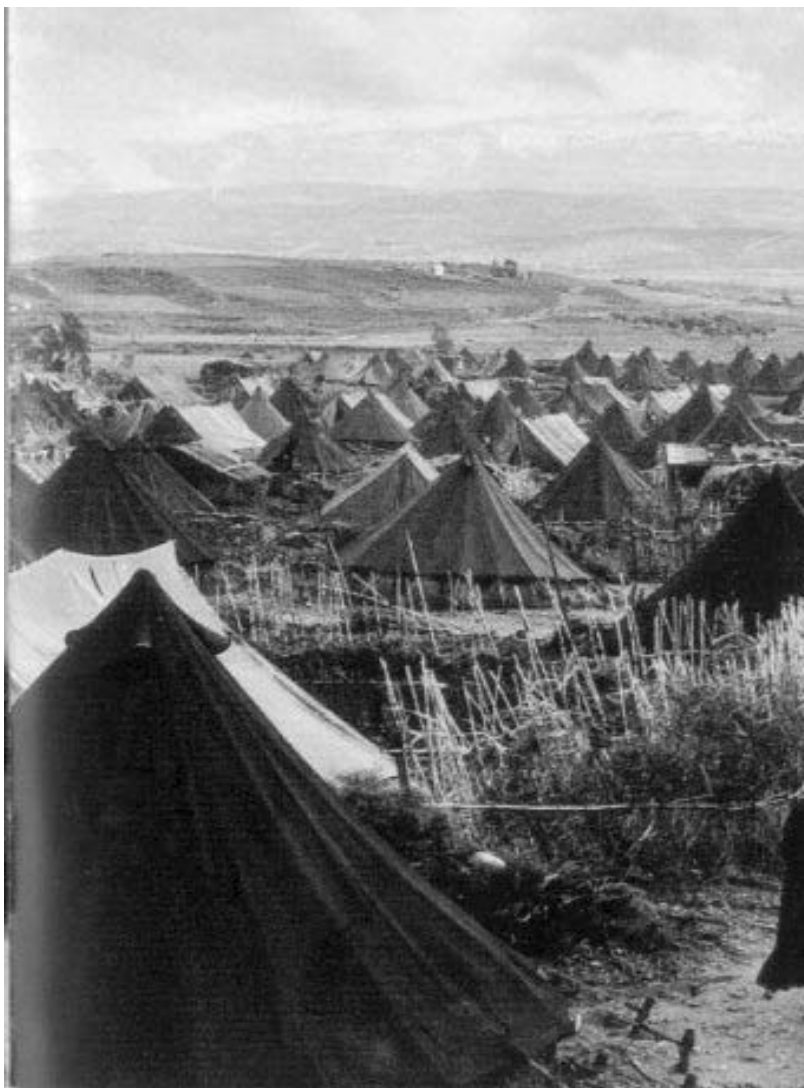
In 1999 when Susan Nathan went to live in Israel under the Law of Return her head was "full of romantic notions of Zionism and the Jewish state." Some three years later she moved from Tel Aviv to live, as the only Jew, in the Arab town of Tamra in the Galilee. Her book, *The Other Side of Israel* (published by Harper Collins last year), tells the story of her "journey across the Jewish-Arab divide", and gives a rare insight into the Jewish state from the perspective of the Palestinians who are Israeli citizens.

The journey began when she was a patient in the Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem, where she was surprised to find Israelis and Palestinians sharing the same ward, and Palestinians who were Israeli citizens: Israeli Arabs. The real shock came when an Orthodox woman was visited by her husband who had "a pistol on one hip and a rifle slung casually over his shoulder" - no one else seemed surprised by the presence of an armed civilian. He told Susan Nathan in a strong American accent that he had requisitioned an Arab home in East Jerusalem and never left home without a weapon. The reply to her suggestion that he would be better off in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City was "All of East Jerusalem belongs to the Jews."

More questioning came a few months later when she was invited to help with a student organisation - Mahapach, in connection with their work for disadvantaged communities in Israel,

"particularly the indigenous Arab population and the community of Jews of Middle Eastern descent...the Mizrahim." She knew of the latter but where did the Arabs live? Why had they been invisible to her during her first two years in Israel?

She was to learn that one million Arabs share the state, and that about a quarter of them are internal refugees. She was "profoundly shaken" by her first visit to an Arab area - the town of Tamra, made as part of the research for Mahapach. It



was strikingly different from any Jewish area she had seen, with obvious, chronic overcrowding.

At the home of Dr Asad Ghanem (head of politics at Haifa University) she heard about the discrimination exercised against the Arab population "in all spheres of Israeli life." In Arab communities there are thousands of homes judged illegal by the state and under the threat of demolition: in Tamra there are 150 such homes. The authorities' version is that the widespread illegal building is the act of law breakers, people squatting on land or not wanting to pay for a licence. So the police bring bulldozers "at crack of dawn" to destroy illegal homes. 500 Arab homes were destroyed in 2003.

Arab families are forced to build illegally because the state refuses to issue them with a building permit. Even when, as in Dr Ghanem's case, the home is built on land owned by his family for generations the permit is still refused: he pays regular heavy fines to ward off demolition. He asked Susan Nathan if she had made aliya, and it was difficult to answer. Her privileges as a Jewish immigrant were at the expense of his people, "sitting in his home the reality finally hit me. The intoxicating power trip had come to an abrupt halt." And the task of becoming informed had begun: the unlearning of her "lifelong Zionist training."

The Zionist myth is that the "Jews had reclaimed an empty, barren land - 'a land without people for a people without land' - we had made the desert bloom, we had filled an uninhabited piece of the Middle East with Kibbutzim, the collective farms that were the pioneering backbone of the state in its early years." Prior to 1948 there had been aggressive colonising of the land by Jewish immigrants, and a campaign of land purchases funded by the Jewish National Fund, but only 7 percent of Palestine had been purchased.

The other side of Israeli Independence in 1948 is for the Palestinians the Nakba (the catastrophe) the loss of their homeland to the Jewish state. 750,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes and country. A map in the book marks the position of the 400 villages which were emptied and then destroyed by the army. The Kibbutzim were built on the land of destroyed villages. Around a hundred villages survived, as did Tamra because it was not on the main route of the Israeli army and was a small community providing "a useful pool of cheap labour in the area." The original village had a population of 2,000, the number was swelled by refugees cleared from other villages. Photographs exist from 1948





Palestine, 1948, after the villages were destroyed.

Though it is not publicly admitted "racist employment practices and the exclusion of Arabs from wealth generating sectors of the economy are the bedrock of state planning policies." Most computer systems do not list Arab communities. Arabic is the second official language, yet people are not allowed to use it at work - a woman was sacked from McDonalds for doing so.

There are two separate school systems, with much less money spent on Arab children. There is intensive surveillance of the Arab education system, teachers are effectively "banned from teaching about the Nakba...or about their people's connection to Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza" and the refugee camps in other countries. In Haifa the Arab Parents' Forum failed in an attempt to register their children at Jewish schools for 2004: Arab pupils are in a separate registration area.

Susan Nathan believes that what happened in the 1948 war is at the root of conflict in the Middle East. The price of creating a homeland was to inflict the "Jewish story of dispossession and wandering on another people - the Palestinians." She makes a distinction between making a comparison, quantitative judgements about the degree of suffering, and drawing a parallel which suggests "one set of events can echo another." Zionist organisations, she says, like the Jewish National Fund and the Jewish Agency should be disbanded and the apartheid system ended; there should be equality between all citizens.

An old man told her of the time when it was possible to travel by train from the Galilee to all of the region's biggest cities "when the borders existed as no more than the lines on maps produced by the area's British and French rulers." Socialists never supported Zionism but opposed it as yet another nationalist delusion as what we aspire to is a world without national frontiers in which free movement is possible and where all people live together as equals. ■

PAT DEUTZ

which show "a sea of Red Cross tents" in which the refugees were housed for some years. One third of the present inhabitants of Tamra are internal refugees. A sizeable number of the 150,000 Palestinians who remained in the country and became Israeli citizens ("by accident rather than design"), were classified as "present absentees", and had their homes, land and bank accounts appropriated by the Custodian of Absentee Property. There is no instance of any property being restored to former Arab owners or compensation paid.

Apartheid

Dispossession still continues in various ways. Planning laws restrict Arab communities both in number - to the 123 listed in 1965 - and in area, even though the population has increased. Israel is an apartheid state which enforces policies of ethnic segregation. Dr Uri Davies, a Jew who, like Susan Nathan, lives in an Arab town, is quoted as applying the term apartheid in a specific sense to mean "the regulation and enforcement of racism and xenophobia in law." He defines the core element of an apartheid state as "the structure of laws that allows the colonising population to exploit the resources of the state - mainly land - to the disadvantage of the native population."



Palestine - 1948. Some of the 804,767 Palestinian men, women, and children who were forced to become permanent refugees.

Travelling People

Caroline Moorehead: *Human Cargo: a Journey among Refugees*. Vintage £7.99.

The title says it all really: human beings shunted from one place to another, in response to political events, and treated as objects to be kept at arm's length or sent back as quickly as possible to wherever they came from. There are perhaps 12 million refugees in the world today, and twice that number of internally displaced people (IDPs), who get less attention, and also less financial support when they return to their homes.

Caroline Moorehead visited a number of areas where refugees live (or survive is perhaps a better word) and talked to many people. She starts in Cairo, full of 'lost boys' from other parts of Africa, originally mainly from Sudan but now increasingly from Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and elsewhere. Many asylum-seekers from Africa travel first to Italy, to Sicily and to Lampedusa, a small island less than 100 miles from the coast of Tunisia; many drown on the way there.

Between Mexico and California is a fence designed to reduce the flow of Mexican migrants northwards. The border is deliberately kept semi-closed, as the US needs some (but not too much) cheap Mexican labour power. But it is still policed in a draconian manner: for instance, a canal which provides a possible crossing point has been converted on the US side so that it's hard to climb out once you've swum over. Over two thousand people have died trying to cross the border, ten times the number who lost their lives trying to escape over the Berlin Wall.

Meanwhile, Australia has an extremely tough line on asylum, following its earlier racist 'White Australia' policy. Would-be migrants from Indonesia and elsewhere in south-east Asia have a hard time even getting there, following the introduction of Operation Relex, which involves naval vessels and aircraft turning back boats of asylum-seekers. Many of those who actually make it to Australia may be locked up indefinitely, despite having committed no crime.

Some Palestinians who fled their homes when Israel was established in 1948 have spent over fifty years in refugee camps - not many, though, because life in a refugee camp is hard and few can survive that long. Many more in number are the children born in camps, to parents who were themselves born there too.

Often, also, refugees are driven to suicide since their stories of violence back home may not be believed. One young Iranian killed himself in Newcastle in 2003, leaving a note that said, 'You have to kill yourself in this country, to prove that you would be killed in your own country.'

One encouraging aspect of the book is the way that local people, from Sicily to Australia and Newcastle, have rallied to support and help refugees in their midst. It is one thing to rail against those who are allegedly coming to steal jobs or live as scroungers, but it is quite another to encounter the hopelessness and destitution of people who just want somewhere to live without persecution and bring up their family.

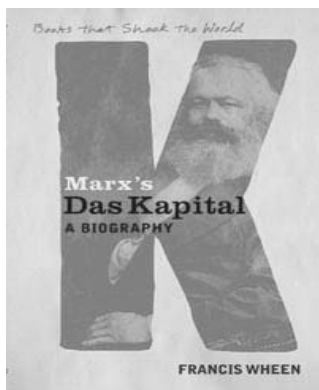
Moorehead makes a number of good points: that migration is 'the unfinished

business of globalisation', and that nobody wants to be a refugee. 'Why', she asks, 'should something as arbitrary as where one is born determine where one is allowed to live?' The answer, sadly, is that under capitalism, artificial lines on maps divide the world into different camps, which enable those who own the earth to defend their bit of it and to make claims on other bits. A sensible society would have no concept of refugeehood or any of the other states of oppression so movingly described here.

PB

Das Kapital

Marx's *Das Kapital* by Francis Wheen. Atlantic Books, 2006.



In a series of "Books That Shook The World" which includes Paine's *Rights of Man* and Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Wheen's biography of *Das Kapital* (to

give *Capital* its original German title) is fairly short at 130 pages including index. Wheen has already had a critical and commercial success with his biography of the man himself, *Karl Marx* (1999) and this work seems likely to do the same.

Das Kapital was planned to be the first of six volumes, but Marx only saw the first volume through to publication. The second and third volumes, and the volumes entitled *Theories of Surplus Value*, were all compiled from Marx's notes after his death. Apart from a brief Introduction, Wheen's book is divided into three chapters: gestation, birth and afterlife. There are no notes, bibliography or guide to further reading and although Wheen is mostly content to let Marx speak for himself he does occasionally paraphrase and in one place he is seriously mistaken. Wheen explains that value (socially necessary labour-time) may differ from price and sometimes price may be higher than value, but Wheen adds, "under a socialist system this surplus would be redistributed for the benefit of the workers" (p.33). Marx never argued this and the whole thrust of *Das Kapital* is that value, price and profit can never work for the benefit of the workers. Marx also, incidentally, never argued for redistribution, preferring instead to judge the success or failure of a social system by its ability to produce for human need. Wheen is rightly critical of commentators who read into *Das Kapital* things which are not there (e.g. increasing "immiseration" or impoverishment of the proletariat), but that has not stopped him falling into the same trap here.

Controversially, Wheen claims that *Das Kapital* should be thought of as a work of art and this was Marx's stated intention. *Das Kapital* is usually depicted as a work of science, but Marx seems to have considered art and science to have similar objectives -

that is, to see through surface appearances ("the veils of illusion") to reveal the underlying reality. And yet it was the late Louis Althusser who maintained that there was an "epistemological break" in Marx's writing, with the early artistic or philosophical work being only of marginal interest, whereas the later works such as *Das Kapital* contained his mature and scientific thinking. But as Wheen points out, in Althusser's posthumous memoir he admitted to being "a trickster and deceiver" and only ever studying "a few passages of Marx." Althusser and his work on Marx was a fraud. But even if Althusser was not a con-man, the distinction between an early and a mature Marx does not withstand serious scrutiny.

The alleged impact of *Das Kapital* on twentieth century politics is well summarised, including the fall of the Russian empire and China's contradictory claim to be "Marxist-Leninist" (Wheen insists that "'Market-Leninist' would be rather more apt"). The framework for viewing these and other events, argues Wheen, is to be found in Marx's writing on capital. For as Wheen puts it:

"Far from being buried under the rubble of the Berlin Wall, Marx may only now be emerging in his true significance. He could yet become the most influential thinker of the twenty-first century."

LEW

Marx's party

A Rebel's Guide to Marx. By Mike Gonzalez. Bookmarks. 2006. 60pp. £2

While factually correct on the details of Marx's life, this SWP booklet suffers (as you would expect) from a significant distortion of Marx's views.

Marx is made out to be a proto-SWPer, obsessed with "building the party". In actual fact, while Marx did use the word "party", before the 1870s it was not in the sense of an organised vanguard, but rather as those, whether organised or not, who wanted communism (or socialism, the same thing), more what we would today call a current of opinion than its subsequent sense of party as an organisation.

Marx did, during the period of Germany's aborted bourgeois revolution of 1848-9, favour communists organising themselves as a distinct group to try to push the bourgeois revolution to its limits and beyond. But, once this period was over, he argued for this communist organisation to be disbanded.

Later, when he was active in the International Working Men's Association from 1864-1872, he advocated the working class organising into a distinct political party. By then "party" had begun to take on its modern meaning and Marx was associated with an organisation in Germany called the "Social Democratic Workers Party" (SDAP)



Venezuela and Chile

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised. Video by Kim Bartley and Donnacha O'Briain. 74 minutes. Available from Power Pictures - Screen Scene, 41 Upper Mount St, Dublin 2. <http://www.chavezthefilm.com>

In 1992 Hugo Chavez, a junior parachute officer, tried to seize power in Venezuela in a traditional South American coup. He failed and spent some time in jail. He then tried another way and in 1998 was elected President, with 56 percent of the votes cast; he was re-elected in 2000 with a 60 percent vote. In elections held to a constituent assembly in 1999 his supporters obtained 120 of the 131 seats.

Chavez is a populist nationalist and radical reformist not a socialist, but his programme of radical reforms and moving from private capitalism towards state capitalism threatened the vested interests of powerful private capitalist groups. According to anarchist and anti-parliamentarist theory, which says that even if power can be won via the ballot box for radical change it can't be retained, what should have happened next was that the powerful groups whose interests were threatened should stage a coup and unleash a bloody repression. As, for instance, in Chile in September 1973:

"Socialism cannot come through the Parliament. If we look at a country like Chile we can see why. In 1973 the people elected a moderate socialist government led by President Allende. This democratically-elected government was toppled by a CIA backed military coup. Repression followed in which the workers movement was smashed and thousands of militants lost their lives" ("What is Anarchism?", www.struggle.ws/pdfs/whatis.pdf)

(This statement is both factually wrong and logically flawed. Allende became president in 1970 and so was not immediately overthrown as is suggested. And if he was a "moderate socialist", i.e. a mere reformist like the Labour and Social Democratic parties of Europe and Australasia, there have been plenty of other such governments, which have not been toppled in a coup; in fact, most haven't. Having said this, socialism cannot come through electing such governments but for quite other reasons than that they come to power through elections.)

On 11 April 2002, true to anarchist theory, a group of top Venezuelan army officers and business leaders did stage a coup. Chavez was arrested and taken to a secret destination where he was put under pressure to resign (he refused). It so happened that an Irish film crew, which had

which, after merging with another group, became in 1875 the "German Socialist Workers Party" (SADP). (It later changed its name to Social Democratic Party of Germany - SPD - which still exists today, as a reformist party.) Marx referred to it simply as the workers' party.

So, Marx's conception of party was that of an open, democratically-organised mass party, not a vanguard of self-appointed professional revolutionaries.

ALB

come to make a documentary about Chavez and Venezuela, was actually in the presidential palace at the time. *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* is a fascinating and instructive record of how events unfolded over the next few days (together with material from the originally-planned film and lots of Spanish with subtitles): the dejected ministers, the installation of the usurper president, the recapture of the palace by the presidential guard, the arrest of some of the plotters, the pro-Chavez street demonstrations and the return of Chavez two days later. He is still there.

So the coup failed. It failed because those who had voted for Chavez were prepared to take to the streets to back up their vote and because the bulk of the armed forces remained loyal to the constitution and the constitutionally-elected president. The anarchist theory that power obtained by the ballot box to effect radical changes can't be retained was disproved by experience.

What happened confirms rather our view that a socialist majority can both win and retain power via the ballot box if that majority is sufficiently organised and determined and if there is no question as to their democratic legitimacy. If pro-capitalist elements were to stage a coup after a socialist election victory it could prove to be even more short-lived than in Venezuela in April 2002. The slogan that anarchists and other chant on demonstrations that "the people united can never be defeated" is actually true, to back up an electoral victory too.

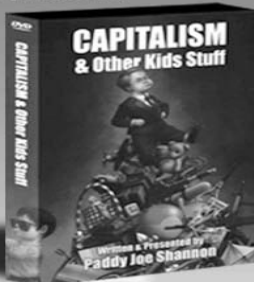
The film is being shown at the Anarchist Bookfair in London this month. It will be interesting to see how they will explain away the events it records. Perhaps they'll change the text of their leaflet to:

"Socialism may be able to come through the Parliament. If we look at a country like Venezuela we cannot see why not. In 1998 and 2000 the people elected a radical reformist government led by President Chavez. An attempt was made in 2002 to topple this democratically elected government but it failed because the government enjoyed majority popular support and the loyalty of the armed forces".

ALB

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All I can say is: Oh my god. I just can't believe how good this is!
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DOUG BROWN, PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, NORTH ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

£5.50 (including P & P) from the Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'

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Saturday 14 October 10.30 to 5.30pm.

Sunday 15 October 11.00 to 5.00pm

Venue: Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4.

Manchester Branch

Monday 23 October, 8.15 pm

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SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX

An index to articles in 2005 can be obtained by sending two first-class stamps to Socialist Standard, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

Note of correction

The article "September 11, 2001: Reflections on a Somewhat Unusual Act of War" (September *Socialist Standard*) refers to arguments that it states were made by anti-war analyst Rahul Mahajan in his book *The New Crusade: America's War on Terrorism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002). In fact, these arguments were drawn from another book by the same author: *Full Spectrum Dominance: U.S. Power in Iraq and Beyond* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003)

In the August issue we stated that "China is using 47 per cent of the world's cement to complete the damming of the Yangzi" (p. 8). In the September issue we wrote that China was using "almost 70 percent of the world's cement supplies on a single dam project" (p. 9). Both figures can't be right. In fact, both are wrong. China is generally calculated as using 47 per cent of the world's cement (see, for example, <http://southasia.oneworld.net/article/view/125468/1/1893>) but not all of this is for the Yangzi dam project.

letters continued

and her family, as well as the public, from an institution that goes hand-in-hand with unequal society? Draw a line under history and move on?

PAUL WILSON, Brighouse, West Yorks.

Reply:

Obviously if the monarchy is still around at the time socialism is established it would be abolished immediately. Such institutionalised privilege can have no place in a society of equals. This said, we don't see any point in wasting time campaigning to get it abolished under capitalism. Whether or not a capitalist state is a monarchy or a republic makes no difference to the economic structure of society, which is the root cause of the problems wage and salary workers face today. Just look at the USA, which has been a republic since the 18th century -

Editors.

Obituary Joe Richmond

Joe Richmond died a few months ago. He was a marvellous member. He taught me what little I know about the Materialist Conception of History and he was the best member I ever heard on Engels's *Transformation From Ape To Man*. He was a great guy. He was a shipwright on the Clydeside and came across the socialist case from a trade union background (as an apprentice he has been involved in the unofficial - and illegal - 1944 apprentices' strike). He later became a school teacher. I remember him best as a lecturer at the Glasgow branch rooms in Berkley Street using fretwork pieces of wood to show how the

continents were formed. Years later on television I saw the same thing. He was also an attender at various classes on philosophy at extra-mural Glasgow University courses where he embarrassed the lecturers with his corrections about the works of Hegel, Engels and Marx. After retiring Joe emigrated to Australia to be near his two sons. He rejoined the Socialist Party and kept up his interest in political matters. We have had many great members, he was one of the best. To his wife Anna and his children we extend our sympathies.

Thanks a lot Joe,

RD



MASS SUICIDE

Under the title "Do not willingly contribute to the mass suicide of the human race" the *Empire News* (24 June, 1956) had the following:

"The highest radioactive deposit in a single day from a thermo-nuclear weapon test was 100 microcuries a square mile at Milford and 25 at Harwell. Daily deposits at Harwell and Milford, however, are generally similar. Danger from these radioactive particles is very slight, say scientists. But one of the radioactive substances, known as strontium 90 may be deposited in grass which is cropped by animals. This gets into their bones and may cause cancer. So the experts warn: limit the number of atom tests. Fears that rainwater may be contaminated from the Monte Bello atom test have arisen in Queensland, Australia, and people have been warned not to drink it for a few days."- The above was taken from a news item, "Atom-Rain Tests."-(*Empire News*, 24.6.56.)

But such is the nature of capitalism; that even though the rival Governments know they may be instrumental in causing the "virtual suicide of the

human race." They dare not let up; for fear of conceding an advantage to their rivals; yet they have the effrontery to call capitalism a



civilised society! Why, by comparison with this, even the most senseless butchery in history seems like sanity. The human race may be virtually dying on its feet; and still the people do nothing about it; when will they get wise; and act on their own behalf instead of waiting and hoping for someone else to put the world right for them?

Workers of the world, put not your trust in leaders. Instead fashion the world the way you want it yourselves by organising for socialism; then you can rest secure in the knowledge that the only developments which will be undertaken will be those which will be of benefit to all.

(From article by Phil Mellor, *Socialist Standard*, October 1956)

Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

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

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

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

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

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the

last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

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

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

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

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



Is There Life After Tony Blair?

Even by the standards we have come to expect from them, it was an outrageous piece of New Labour spin to tell us that the leadership handover between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown would be "smooth and orderly". For one thing Blair and his cronies must have known that announcing his intention to resign on some unnamed, unpredictable date in the future ensured that the handover would take place after a long period of chaos as a succession of hopefuls - and no-hopers - pushed themselves as potential leaders. We had already had the sly briefing about Gordon Brown's alleged "psychological flaws" (which must apply to many politicians). The infighting could have been prevented by settling on a firm date but whenever this was raised with Blair he brushed it aside by saying that he would go when he had done his job of clearing up a few trivial matters like crime, the wars in the Middle East and Iraq, the NHS, education, poverty... The very idea is laughable, that there will ever, can ever, be a day when a political leader can pass into well earned retirement because they have succeeded in making all the necessary adjustments and improvements to society, so that from now on all will be smooth and orderly. While there is no evidence that Blair is an avid student of history it is clear that he has absorbed many of its essential lessons in the sleazier arts of politics.

Morrison

What can be said, on that score, about Gordon Brown? When he made that deal, across the Granita table, with Blair, did he not have an inkling of what he was committing himself to? Was he entirely innocent of any doubts about politicians' readiness to keep their word? Did he not reflect on the examples of other nominated heirs to a party leadership who had failed miserably to achieve it? When the Attlee government was elected in 1945 the Deputy Leader of the party was Herbert Morrison, a canny, cocky political operator with the common touch. In contrast, Attlee was understated, not to say drab; when he was made Leader in 1935 Hugh Dalton, who was later Chancellor of the Exchequer, bemoaned "...a wretched and disheartening result... And a little mouse shall lead them". After Labour's emphatic win Morrison made it clear that he had no intention of agreeing to Attlee as Prime Minister and that, before he accepted he job, Attlee should submit himself to a vote of confidence by the Parliamentary Labour Party.

This was the kind of situation which, in recent times, must have provoked an incandescent row between Brown and Blair. Attlee, however, was in a different mode. After his election triumph he went quietly with his wife for tea at the Great Western Hotel in London and it was there, among the delicate china and the scones, he was told that King George VI was anxious to fill the vacancy for a new government for British capitalism and would he please go to Buckingham Palace to set the royal mind at rest. Attlee took the view that the monarch should not be kept waiting while the Parliamentary Labour Party made up its mind so he went at once to the Palace where "without quibbles" as he put it, he accepted the top job. (He got his vote of confidence the next day - as if an hysterically triumphant, desperately ambitious, party would ever have dreamed of denying it to him).

Churchill

Attlee later described the notion of Morrison being party leader as "fantastic" - seriously out of touch with reality. He continued as leader after his government were defeated in the 1951 election, leaving Morrison to sulk and snipe, fretful in the knowledge that the longer Attlee stayed on the weaker his chances of succeeding. It was clear at that time that if the Labour Party was to have any hope of clawing their way back into government they would need to undertake a comprehensive overhaul of their policies and presentation but Attlee was too weary after his years in government to do anything about it. That was probably the time for him to retire but instead he kept going, which had the effect of stifling Morrison's leadership chances (Morrison was, of course, convinced that this was the motivation). After Labour was defeated again, in 1955, Attlee carried on for a few months and then suddenly resigned, going to the House of Lords. The delay in his going had had its effect; Hugh Gaitskell had emerged as the likeliest leadership candidate and he won the ballot over both



Morrison and Aneurin Bevan, leaving Morrison to nurse his bitter disappointment.

The Tory government which followed had its own inheritance problems for Winston Churchill had always made it clear that he would be succeeded as leader by his

Deputy Anthony Eden; for example in 1942 Churchill told the King that if he failed to return from one of his trips abroad Eden should be asked to take his place. In spite of the Tories' calamitous defeat in the 1945 election Churchill hung on as leader (in any case he never made any secret of his reluctance to take account of his party's wishes). But he was bored in opposition and he might have resigned then except that his "Iron Curtain" speech seemed to revive his confidence in himself as an historic figure so he stayed, while playing on Eden's loyalty by throwing out occasional hints that he would hand over in the near future - rather like Tony Blair today. At the same time Churchill made it clear that he would regard any suggestion that he should resign as base treachery. Even when he had a succession of strokes, notably in 1949 and 1953, which progressively disabled him, he kept himself in the job. It seemed as if he would never go.

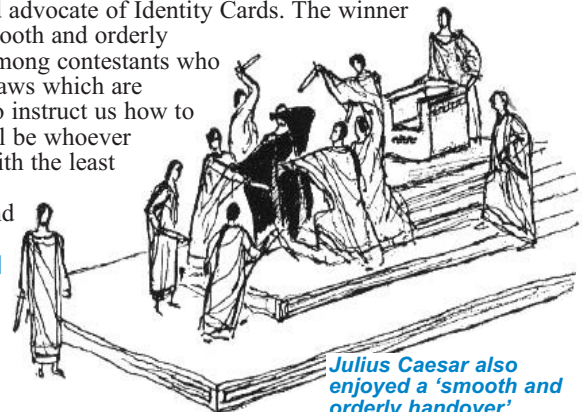
Eden

The grinding pressure of disappointment aggravated Eden's emotional and medical difficulties; at the time of Churchill's 1953 stroke Eden was convalescing abroad after an operation, which prevented him taking over. In any case Churchill, in the words of his son Randolph, "fought his way back to health with a Roman mastery of mind over flesh" so that he was still Prime Minister when he turned 80 in November 1954. He resigned in April 1955 and Eden came at last into his inheritance, except that it was a procession of disasters. Under scathing criticism from a normally loyal Tory press - the *Daily Telegraph* ranted about "changes of mind by the Government; half measures; and the postponement of decisions" - the breaking point for him was his obsessive but doomed attempt to revive the standing of British capitalism in the Middle East by the Suez invasion (his wife later told how at times she had felt as if the Suez Canal was running through their living room). By now a very sick man, virtually living on prescribed drugs, Eden gave up and went to the West Indies to recuperate. After all that waiting, he had been Prime Minister for less than two years.

Spite

A common factor in these episodes, as with the present clash between Blair and Brown, is the absence of any differences in policy. The disputes were not about whether to run capitalism but who should be allowed to indulge their ambitions by doing so. From those roots a tangled growth of spite and venom has flourished, in which Brown abruptly ceased to be the assumed, widely welcomed, successor to Blair and instead became the target of vicious personal attacks, some of which originated from people who were themselves far from blameless. "Compulsive obsessive", "autistic" and "childish vanity" were among the kinder assessments of Brown. Perhaps most audacious of all was Charles Clarke's charge that Brown is a "control freak", which overlooked the fact that when he was Home Secretary Clarke was a relentless, determined advocate of Identity Cards. The winner of this "smooth and orderly process" among contestants who lay down laws which are designed to instruct us how to behave will be whoever emerges with the least shredded clothing and the fewest wounds. ■

IVAN



Julius Caesar also enjoyed a 'smooth and orderly handover'.



Voice from the Back

The Inequalities Of Capitalism

A good example of the class division in modern society can be seen when we look at the wealth of the top 0.1 percent of the population in the USA. "An analysis by David Cay Johnston in the New York Times found that the average annual inflation-adjusted income of this group increased by 2.5 times, to \$3 million (£1.6 million), from 1980 to 2002. The average net worth of those on the Forbes 400 list has mushroomed in the past 20 years, rising from \$390 million (£206 million) to \$2.8 billion (£1.48 billion)" (*Times*, 17 August). As for you and your family, "inflation adjusted" how are you doing? A little less than \$3 million this year I would imagine.

Pardon Our French

Nothing sums up capitalism better than the article that appeared in the *Observer* Magazine (27 August) when dealing with the former member of the Workers Revolutionary Party John Bird, who it describes as an entrepreneur. We think this might mean con man but we never went to French classes. This enterprising



person may be more familiar to you as the owner of the magazine *The Big Issue* - yes the one you bought because you felt sorry for the lady outside the bus station. Here is the owner of that magazine on the homeless and how he feels about it. "Fifty years ago a homeless person wasn't allowed to sleep rough or beg. They'd get a menial job but they were part of society. Nowadays they pay nothing. They are

infantilised. And it costs us £60,000 to keep each one of them in that state." We must go to French classes. Perhaps entrepreneur really means "arrogant owning class bastard."

Exploitation

It is a basic premise of socialists that all wealth that is produced inside modern capitalism is the product of the working class and that the capitalist class live off the surplus value that the working class produce. Now we have such pillars of capitalist society as the *Observer* and *Reuters* agreeing with us. "The 20 largest quoted companies in the UK make an average of over £96,000 pre-tax profit per employee, according to research carried out by the *Observer*. ... BG, formerly British Gas, made by far the most - approximately £445,000 ..." (*Observer*, 27 August). Are you understanding these figures? On average your employer cons you out of more than £1,800 a week and in the case of BG over £8,000 a week. Why aren't you a socialist? Are you a shareholder in BG?

The American Dream

There is a popular misconception about that as the USA is the world's most developed capitalist country and the most productive the American workers must be well off. A recent report from the Washington-based Economic Policy Institute shows that this is not true. "Adjusted for inflation, average wages in the US are now lower than they were in 2000 - so the benefits of the rapid increases in productivity ... are not being passed to the workers. In fact, as the New York Times reported last week, official figures show that wages and salaries now make up the smallest part of GDP since records began in 1947.... In 1965, CEOs earned 24 times more than the average worker; by 2005 it was 262 times. ... The top 20 per cent of asset-holders now control 85 per cent of all America's wealth." (*Observer*, 3 September)

Bones of Contention

The National Museum of Kenya is to re-open next year after extensive renovations. It will feature a special exhibit The Origins Of Man which will display the

key fossil finds of Africa's Great Rift Valley - considered by many to be the cradle of humanity. All round celebrations locally, you may imagine. Not a bit of it. "It's creating a big weapon against Christians that's killing our faith," said Bishop Boniface Adoyo, who is leading the hide-the-bones-campaign." (*Observer*, 10 September). This individual is chairman of the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya, which claims to represent churches of 35 denominations with 9 million members. No surprise there, he is carrying on the long tradition of Christian suppression of scientific enquiry.

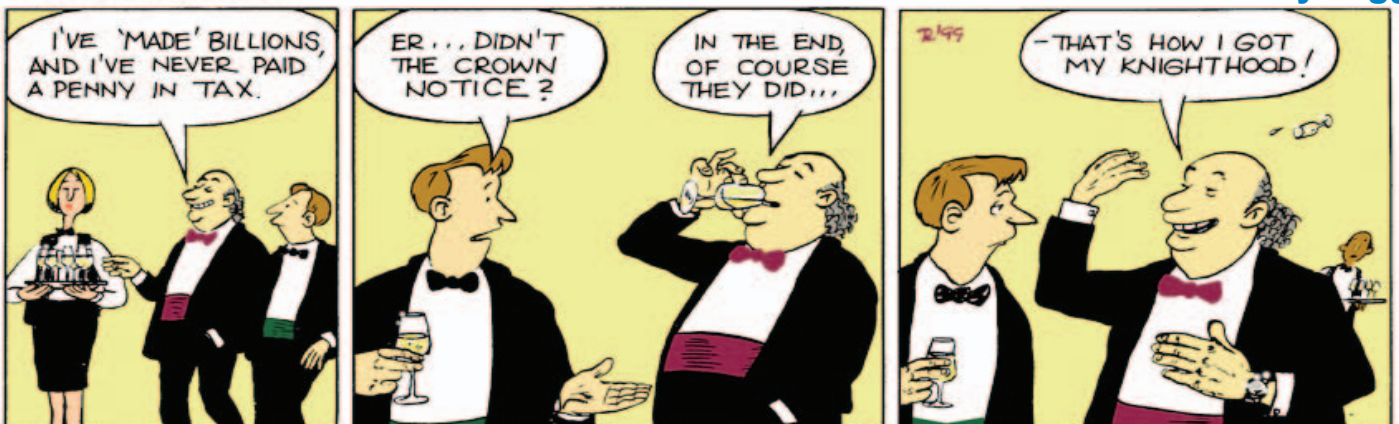
Big Brother Is Watching You

George Orwell's *1984* was a dystopia where every move of the worker was monitored, but Orwell's nightmare has arrived. "Learn that truth, and learn it well; what you do at work is the boss's business. Xora and SurfControl are just some of the new technologies that have sprung up in the past two years peddling products and services - software, GPS video and phone surveillance, even investigators - that let managers get to know you really well. The worst mole sits right on your desk. Your computer can be rigged to lock down work files, restrict Web searches and flag e-mailed jokes about the CEO's wife. 'Virtually nothing you do at work on your computer can't be monitored', says Jeremy Gruber, legal director of the US National Workrights Institute, which advocates work place privacy" (*Time*, 11 September). The article goes on to quantify how widespread this snooping is. 76 percent of employers watch your use of the Web, 36 percent track the content and time spent on the keyboard. 38 percent hire staff to sift through your e-mail and 38 percent have fired workers over the last 12 months for misuse of the e-mail.



Free Lunch

by Rigg



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